IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA

MOUNTAIN VALLEY PIPELINE, L.L.C., : Civil Action No. 2:17-cv-04214

Plaintiff, : Judge John T. Copenhaver, Jr.

vs.

AN EASEMENT TO CONSTRUCT,
OPERATE AND MAINTAIN A 42-INCH
GAS TRANSMISSION LINE ACROSS
PROPERTIES IN THE COUNTIES OF
NICHOLAS, GREENBRIER, MONROE,
SUMMERS, BRAXTON, HARRISON,
LEWIS, WEBSTER, AND WETZEL, WEST
VIRGINIA, et al.

:

Defendants.

:

PLAINTIFF'S RESPONSE TO LANDOWNERS' EMERGENCY MOTION

In accordance with the Court's November 9, 2017 Order [ECF No. 17], Plaintiff
Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC ("MVP") files the following response to Defendants Orus Ashby
Berkley, Reinhard Bouman, Ashofteh Bouman, Charles F. Chong, Rebecca Ann Eneix-Chong,
Hilry Gordon, Robert M. Jarrell, Ronald Tobey, Elizabeth Tobey, Brian Van Nostrand, and
Helen M. Van Nostrand's (collectively, "Landowners") Emergency Motion to Suspend Briefing
Schedule on Plaintiff's Pending Motions, to Set Scheduling Conference, to Expedite Briefing
and Consideration of the Emergency Motion, and to Treat Service of this Motion on Plaintiff as
Notice to all Parties Under FRCP 5(c)(1)(C) (the "Emergency Motion") [ECF. No. 13].

In their Emergency Motion, the Landowners request that the Court (1) suspend the briefing schedule for MVP's pending motions, (2) direct MVP to inform the Court once it completes service on all defendants, and (3) once service has been completed, set a scheduling and status conference "for the purposes of determining a briefing schedule for all three pending

motions." Motion at 6-7. Landowners argue in their Emergency Motion that a "single deadline for all defendants to respond to" MVP's Motion for Expedited Hearing would promote "principles of judicial economy for the Court." Emergency Motion at ¶ 10. According to Landowners, any briefing schedule should be based upon the "completion of service date" of the defendants. Id. ¶ 11. Landowners further contend that MVP's Motions for Partial Summary Judgment are "premature." Id. ¶ 9 n.3.

On November 9, 2017, the Court entered an Order setting a deadline of December 4, 2017 for all defendants to respond to MVP's Motions for Partial Summary Judgment and Immediate Access and Motion for Expedited Hearing, setting a preliminary scheduling and status conference for November 16, 2017, and requesting that MVP respond to Landowner's Emergency Motion by November 15, 2017 [ECF No. 17]. The Court's scheduling of the December 4, 2017, response deadline for MVP's pending motions moots, in part, the Emergency Motion. The sole remaining issue is the scheduling of a hearing on MVP's pending Motions for Partial Summary Judgment and Immediate Access.

As set forth in MVP's Motion for Expedited Hearing [ECF No. 8], a hearing on MVP's pending Motions for Partial Summary Judgment and Immediate Access should be held no later than December 13, 2017, or as soon thereafter as accommodates the Court's schedule. MVP's Motions for Partial Summary Judgment and Immediate Access seek a determination from the Court as to (1) MVP's authority to condemn and (2) its right to immediate access to and possession of the property interests held by defendants and condemned in this action. In its

¹ On November 8, 2017, MVP filed a status report with the Court confirming that, as of the date of filing, 104 of the defendants had been personally served, with 28 additional defendants to be served by publication in accordance with Fed. R. Civ. P. 71.1(d)(3)(B) [ECF No. 15]. As of the date of filing of this Response, a total of 127 defendants have been personally served in accordance with Fed. R. Civ. P. 71.1(d)(3)(A). Service by publication in all nine counties affected by the MVP Project has been commenced as to the 28 defendants and will be completed as of December 6, 2017.

memoranda in support of the Motions, MVP sets out the facts justifying immediate relief.

Despite Landowners' contention that MVP's pending summary judgment motions are

"premature," under Fed. R. Civ. P 56, a motion for summary judgment may be filed "at any time until 30 days after the close of all discovery." Fed. R. Civ. P. 56. Federal Rule of Civil

Procedure 65, which governs motions for preliminary injunction, also does not preclude the filing of a motion for preliminary injunction at this stage and, in fact, "provides express authority for consolidating the hearing of an application for a preliminary injunction with the trial on the merits." *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 65(a)(2) advisory comm. n. As such, Landowners' contention that MVP's motions are "premature" is inapposite and contradicts the very purpose of seeking preliminary injunctive relief.

In the Emergency Motion, Landowners also question whether "Plaintiff's chosen strategy complies with the procedures approved by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in *East Tennessee Natural Gas Co. v. Sage*, 361 F.3d 808 (4th Cir. 2004)." Emergency Motion ¶ 12. In *Sage*, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals established a two-step procedure for granting access prior to the determination of just compensation in a condemnation case: (1) establish the right to condemn and (2) prove the requirements for injunctive relief. *See Sage*, 361 F.3d at 831 ("[O]nce a district court determines that a gas company has the substantive right to condemn property under the [Natural Gas Act], the court may use its equitable power to grant the remedy of immediate possession through the issuance of a preliminary injunction."). Here, MVP is simply following the procedure established by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Sage*—MVP's motion for partial summary judgment seeks to establish MVP's substantive right to condemn the property under the Natural Gas Act as the first step to its request for immediate possession. The scheduling of a hearing on or before December 13, 2017, approximately seven

weeks after the filing of MVP's Complaint, is consistent with principles of judicial economy and would serve to prevent the potential for irreparable harm outlined in MVP's motions and memoranda in support. *See Columbia Gas Transmission, LLC v. 171.54 Acres*, No. 2:17-cv-70, 2017 WL 838214 (S.D. Ohio Mar. 3, 2017) (holding a hearing four weeks after filing of complaint); *Sabal Trail Transmission, LLC v. 1.44 Acres*, No. 5:16-cv-164, 2016 WL 2991151 (M.D. Fla. May 24, 2016) (holding a hearing within eight weeks after filing of complaint); *Columbia Gas Transmission LLC v. 0.85 Acres*, No. CV 14-2288, 2014 WL 4471541 (D. Md. Sept. 8, 2014) (holding a hearing within seven weeks after filing of complaint).

As the response deadline for MVP's pending motions has already been scheduled for December 4, 2017, MVP requests that this Court allow MVP to file any reply by December 11, 2017 and proceed to a hearing on or before December 13, 2017, or as soon thereafter as suits the Court's schedule.

November 15, 2017

REED SMITH LLP

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Counsel for Plaintiff Mountain Valley Pipeline, L.L.C.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that a true and correct copy of the foregoing has been served via U.S. First Class Mail upon the individuals identified on the attached Service List.

Dated: November 15, 2017 /s/ Nicolle R. Snyder Bagnell

SERVICE LIST

The undersigned hereby certifies that a true and correct copy of the foregoing has been served upon the following via U.S. First Class Mail:

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Dated: November 15, 2017 By: /s/ Nicolle R. Snyder Bagnell